



Members:

Sen. Sandra Dempsey, Chair
Sen. Sue Landske
Sen. Joseph Zakas
Sen. Rose Antich
Sen. William Alexa
Sen. Earline Rogers
Rep. Thomas Alevizos
Rep. Charlie Brown
Rep. Robert Kuzman
Rep. Timothy Fesko
Rep. Dean Mock
Rep. Ralph Ayres
Mayor Duane Dedelow
Mayor James Perron

NORTHWEST INDIANA COMMUTER RAIL AND TRANSPORTATION STUDY COMMISSION

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MEETING MINUTES

Meeting Date: June 30, 1998
Meeting Time: 10:00 A.M.
Meeting Place: 6100 Southport Road, NIRPC Offices
Meeting City: Portage, Indiana 46368
Meeting Number: 1

Members Present: Sen. Sandra Dempsey, Chair; Sen. Joseph Zakas; Sen. Earline Rogers; Sen. William Alexa; Sen. Rose Ann Antich; Rep. Thomas Alevizos; Rep. Dean Mock; Rep. Ralph Ayres; Mayor James Perron.

Members Absent: Sen. Sue Landske; Rep. Charlie Brown; Rep. Timothy Fesko; Rep. Robert Kuzman; Mayor Duane Dedelow.

The Chair, Sen. Dempsey, called the meeting to order at 10:21 and introduced Commission members and staff. The first order of business was the approval of the minutes of the December 29, 1997, meeting. Commission member Perron made the motion for approval of the minutes. The motion was seconded by Sen. Alexa. The minutes were approved unanimously.

The next order of business was the approval of the December, 1997, Status Report of the Commission. Sen. Zakas asked that the Status Report be amended to include the Capital Avenue project. Sen. Zakas made a motion to approve the Status Report as amended. Sen. Alexa seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously. Sen. Dempsey asked if there were any questions. Mr. Jim Ranfranz, Director of the Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission (NIRPC) asked if he could reserve comment on the report because he said that there was no mention of NIRPC in the report. It was pointed out that NIRPC was mentioned on page four of the Status Report.

Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission (NIRPC) Update Vision 2020

Mr. Ranfranz discussed an update of the NIRPC Vision 2020 Transportation Plan for Northwest Indiana. Mr. Ranfranz reviewed the process and partnership with the Indiana Department of Transportation (INDOT). Mr. Ranfranz provided the Road Projects Summary for Indiana in Calendar Year 1997.¹ This

¹Mr. Ranfranz's materials are on file in the Legislative Information Center, Room 230 of the State House, Indianapolis, Indiana, 46204. The telephone number of the Legislative Information Center is (317) 232-9856.

document revealed that, on average, each county received 6 projects. Lake County had the most with 48. INDOT let its most expensive project in December, 1997, a road and bridge rehabilitation project on I-80 in Lake County. This project cost \$29 million. Lake County had over \$97 million in projects let in calendar year 1997.

NIRPC - Steve Strains: TEA 21 Update

Mr. Steve Strains, NIRPC, provided the Commission with an update of the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA 21).² TEA 21 is a six-year bill, extending from 1998-2003. Overall funding levels of TEA 21 is \$216 billion for all methods of transportation, with an average of \$36 billion for all methods. Indiana will receive, on average, about \$217 million per year in additional funding, an increase of about 52% over what they received from the 1991 federal highway funding bill, the Intermodal Surface Transportation and Efficiency Act (ISTEA).

Darren Henderson: NIRPC

Mr. Darren Henderson, NIRPC, provided the Commission with the NIRPC Vision 2020 Regional Transportation Plan.³ Mr. Henderson reviewed project planning and discussed funding. He said that NIRPC is about half-way through the planning process. The Plan should be completed by October, 1998. Mr. Henderson said that the federal Clean Air Act requires that any proposed air quality improvements for the Northwest region cannot contribute more pollution than that which is already measured. Any air quality plan must be approved by the Indiana Department of Environmental Management (IDEM). In response to a Commission question, Mr. Henderson said that the Borman Expressway in Northwest Indiana operates under strict guidelines. Sen. Dempsey and Rep. Alevizos asked if adding lanes to the Borman would reduce hydro carbon emissions on the Borman. Mr. Henderson said that it is possible that adding lanes to the Borman would reduce hydro carbon emissions. This happens because when traffic is moving, there are less hydro carbon emissions as opposed to when the traffic is stopped which apparently occurs frequently on the Borman Expressway.

Rep. Alevizos questioned Mr. Henderson on the scoring codes for air projects. Mr. Henderson briefly explained the scoring codes and air projects. He said that IDEM establishes a budget (amounts of pollution) for fixed and mobile sources of pollution. When asked who contributes to the pollution problem in Northwest Indiana, Mr. Henderson said that truck traffic is part of the problem, but so is everything else, for example, lawn mowers, gas grills, etc.

When asked about the role of the legislature in this, Mr. Henderson said that they can supply the funding for transit programs. He mentioned the Northern Indiana Commuter Transportation District (NICTD).

Mr. Ranfranz commented that with TEA 21 and the NIRPC Vision 2020, he sees a new and expanded role of INDOT in the process.

Northern Indiana Commuter Transportation District (NICTD): John Parsons

Mr. John Parsons, NICTD, provided the Commission with an update of its Major Investment Study (MIS) to investigate the means of providing travel between western Lake County, Indiana and Chicago, Illinois.⁴ This MIS is a continuation of previous studies performed to determine viable transportation improvements to address demand for travel between Northwest Indiana and downtown Chicago. The purpose of this MIS is to analyze a number of possible routing alternatives for commuter rail service in terms of potential ridership, location, construction cost, environmental impacts of improvements, concerns of municipal governments through which potential commuter services may run, and to provide a detailed estimated

²Mr. Strains' material is on file in the Legislative Information Center (see footnote 1).

³This document is on file in the Legislative Information Center (see footnote 1).

⁴This document is on file with the Legislative Information Center (See footnote 1).

cost of each alignment alternative.

The \$620,000 study is funded with \$500,000 in federal funds and \$120,000 from NICTD. Total construction and implementation costs for the proposed rail service is estimated at \$150 million. Mr. Parsons commented that this could be a catalyst for other commuter efforts. Sen. Alexa inquired if the study will consider a subway. Mr. Parsons said no. The study will look at grade crossings only.

INDOT: Phil Schermerhorn

Mr. Schermerhorn, Deputy Commissioner of INDOT for Public and Legislative Affairs, briefed the Commission on various matters. Mr. Schermerhorn made available phase I of the Northwest Indiana Corridor Study.⁵ Phase I includes initiation of study activities, organization of the public involvement process (Steering Committee, Technical Committee, etc.), initial Borman Expressway/I-65 SWAT activities, and air quality guidance. In addition, the consultant team will work closely with NIRPC to ensure that travel demand forecasting procedures and model can be used to efficiently test the various alternatives in addition to meeting requirements for the air quality analyses. According to Phase I, key products, in addition to technical memoranda prepared for various elements, will be the documentation of the scoping process leading to alternatives to be carried forward into Phase II.

The \$560,000 study is being conducted by Burgess/Nipole. Mr. Schermerhorn said that the study will be completed in 1999.

Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA 21)

Mr. Schermerhorn told the Commission that the newly passed federal highway bill will mean more money for Indiana. Indiana has been receiving about 78 cents for every dollar it sends to Washington. The state will now receive 90.5 cents for every dollar it sends to Washington. In commenting on TEA 21, Mr. Schermerhorn said that Dennis Faulkenberg, Deputy Commissioner and Chief Financial Officer of INDOT, along with Congressman Ed Pease, and the entire Indiana Congressional delegation deserve much credit for how well Indiana did in the final version of TEA 21.

Mr. Schermerhorn told the Commission that the Crossroads 2000 program, which is a four-year bonding program for highways, will generate about \$560 million for new highway construction during the four years. The debt service for the program is funded by an increase in various motor vehicle fees. Mr. Schermerhorn told the Commission that the State of Indiana has just issued \$170 million in bonds for the Crossroads 2000 program.

In response to several Commission questions, Mr. Schermerhorn provided the following answers. INDOT deals with railroads through its Rail Division. Mr. Schermerhorn will provide the Commission with an update on sound barriers on the Indiana Toll Road.

Future Direction of the Commission

The Chair announced that the Commission will rotate its meeting place for all subsequent meetings, but all meetings will be held in the Northwest Indiana region. The Chair said that the Commission will meet at least five times during the interim. Commission member Perron said that he would like to thank Curt Wiley, Commissioner of INDOT and Dennis Faulkenberg, Deputy Commissioner and Chief Financial Officer of INDOT, for their efforts on TEA 21. Mayor Perron said that he sent a letter to the governor and Curt Wiley asking that 1% of the new highway revenue be dedicated to high speed rail. Rep. Alevizos commented that he was opposed to high speed rail to Elkhart. Mayor Perron said that the high speed rail would go to Cleveland and beyond.

The Chair announced that the next meeting would be on Tuesday, July 28 in Hammond. With no further business, Senator Dempsey adjourned the meeting at 12:30 p.m.

⁵This document is on file with the Legislative Information Center (See footnote 1).